



THE BIBLICAL BACKGROUND OF EVANGELISM

A Lecture Series by
Samuel H. Moffett

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Four Lectures by
Dr. Samuel H. Moffett

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Dr. Robert J. Lamont

Dr. Samuel Hugh Moffett

*Dr. John D. Tait
P. U. B. C. President*

Dr. Samuel H. Moffett is presently the Dean of the Graduate School and Professor of Historical Theology in the Presbyterian Seminary at Seoul, Korea. He received his undergraduate education at Wheaton College (1938) and his seminary training at Princeton Theological Seminary (1942). He received his Doctor of Philosophy Degree from Yale University (1945).

Dr. Moffett served as the Director of the Department of Youth Work for the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions from 1945 to 1947. While serving as a Presbyterian missionary to China in the years 1947 to 1951 he served on the faculties of Yenchine University, Peking, China; and the Nanking Theological Seminary, Nanking, China. He returned to the United States in 1953 and served for two years on the faculty of the Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1955 he began his service to the Church in Korea.

Dr. Moffett is presently a member of the Korean-American Association, and a Councillor of the Royal Asiatic Society (of which he has just been nominated President). He is also a contributing editor to Christianity Today and Presbyterian Outlook.

His other publications include: "Where'er the Sun", New York (1953), "En la Rnta del Sol", Buenos Aires (1954 Spanish translation) and "The Christians of Korea" New York (1962).

PREFACE

If there was ever a time when the Protestant Church needed to examine and discover again "The Biblical Background of Evangelism" that time is now. If there was ever a man providentially prepared to lead the church in that experience of searching the Scripture for the mandate of God for our day, that man is Dr. Samuel H. Moffett. Dr. Moffett, a distinguished missionary statesman, was invited by Presbyterians United for Biblical Confession to be the keynote speaker at a series of Conferences on Evangelism sponsored by P. U. B. C. The printing of Dr. Moffett's lectures will insure a wider examination of the challenge of a vital evangelism for our time.

Unfortunately, the polarization which has developed in our country has also come into all areas of the life and word of the Church, so much so that the major thrust of most denominations seems to be in the direction of "evangelizing the structures of society." Who will evangelize the inhabitants of the structures? What form will that evangelizing take? Or to put it another way, how can "presence and proclamation" be combined so that the whole man is able to respond to the redeeming grace of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Dr. Moffett's forthright presentation of the Biblical background of evangelism can provide the foundation upon which, by the grace of God, the Church can move out into our complex society as the servant church who like her Master "came not to be ministered unto but to minister." Dr. Moffett believes that the Church can be evangelistic and Biblically orientated and at the same time imaginatively and effectively cognizant of her witness in the midst of the social ferment in which she has been placed.

Since the adoption of "The Confession of 1967" P. U. B. C. has recently broadened its scope of interest and modified its name to "Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns." Article two of its constitution states the purpose of this denomination-wide organization:

Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns is a fellowship of United Presbyterian Churchmen who love Christ, the Church and all men because of Christ and the Church. The purpose of this fellowship is to offer an opportunity for study and expression of issues creating deep concern in our communion and for mutual enrichment within the framework of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. All laymen and clergymen within the Church who would like to discuss with positive spirit these basic issues in a desire to continue within our denomination its unique Protestant and Reformed emphasis are invited to participate in this fellowship.

May God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead use Dr. Moffett's witness and P. U. B. C. for the redemption of men and the strengthening of the Kingdom of God.

Robert J. Lamont, D. D.
First Presbyterian Church
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

I. What is Evangelism?

Two classes of people, Presbyterians and Theologians, I regret to say, have something of a reputation for their skepticism about evangelism. "Theologians," says Dr. Hoekendijk of Union Seminary, "have been among the most unconquerable saboteurs of evangelism."⁽¹⁾ And some Presbyterians, rather than evangelize, seem to take a perverse pride in losing members as if this attested to the fearlessness of their prophetic preaching which may sometimes be true - but may more often testify rather to the peripheral nature of their preaching, articulate at the active edge, but silent at the vitalizing center where commitment to Christ begins.

No Christian today, not even a theologian or a Presbyterian, can any longer afford the luxury of indifference to the call of evangelism. "Even theologians," says Dr. Hoekendijk, "seem to have rediscovered here and there (evangelism's) relevance. They realize that they jeopardize the Biblical authenticity of their thinking if they go on refusing to acknowledge that the church is set in this world with the sole purpose of carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth..."⁽²⁾

As for Presbyterians, can any Calvinist who has read his church history defend the proposition that evangelism is unpresbyterian? In less than eleven crucial years, from 1555 to 1566, 121 evangelists, personally trained by Calvin, were dispatched into persecuted France from Geneva. In their first four years those pioneer Presbyterian evangelists founded 2000 new French Calvinist congregations. Evangelism is as Presbyterian as John Calvin.

But the first question to ask about evangelism is not, Are we for it or against it? ,but rather, **What is it?**

Unfortunately, one of the symptoms of the sickness of the church in our time is that such a question is more apt to split Christians into controversy, than unite them in mission. Philip Potter, in an excellent paper, "Evangelism and the World Council of Churches," notes with concern that an opinion poll on missionary priorities put "meeting human need" as the most favored priority; it put preaching as the most opposed priority; and it put conversion as the most controversial subject.

How easily we divide about evangelism. To some people evangelism is what Billy Graham does, and what their pastor, alas, does not do—as if the two were pulling in different directions. To some, evangelism is a rapid stream of Bible verses fired at prospective converts. Others would never think of quoting the Bible. They prefer to think that anything they do as Christians is evangelism, and that a friendly world will prefer the warm but silent witness of a Christian life to the articulated and upsetting specifics of the Christian faith. To some, evangelism is changing people so that the world will believe. To others it is changing the world so that people will believe. To some it is the sawdust trail, scalding tears and the confessions of a broken heart. To others it is the Sunday morning sermon and the communicants class and the public confession of Christ in the congrega-

tion of the church. These are some of the ways we divide and differ as we define evangelism.

But if, as Dr. Hoekendijk has asserted, "Biblical authenticity" demands that theologians rediscover evangelism, let us make sure that the evangelism we rediscover is Biblically authentic. What does the Bible say that evangelism is? If God has something to say about evangelism in his Word, it would be wise for us to listen to Him first, before we choose sides and allow our preconceived notions of evangelism to push us into one or more of the straitjackets that the current debates about evangelism hold out to us.

The Bible, however, gives no quick answer to the search for a definition of evangelism. God's word is true but not always simple. With the best of intentions we tend to oversimplify what is not that simple, like the enthusiast who objected when the great Dr. Chalmers, the Edinburgh evangelist, sent his son off to St. Andrews for an education. "No," said the zealous friend. "The times are too urgent. Send him to the fields white for harvest. Not to school." And Chalmers gently replied, "Who accomplishes the most? The man who goes into the forest with a dull axe, and works all day, or the man who stays home long enough to sharpen his axe, and then spends the rest of the day chopping trees."

Before we plunge into what we think is evangelism, let us sharpen our axe for a few moments with the Word of God. What does the Bible say evangelism is?

The first surprise of Scripture for the would-be evangelist is that the word "evangelism" is not in the Bible. It does not even appear in the English language until the 17th century.⁽³⁾ The Christian faith, as set forth in God's word, does not come in abstractions, in "isms"—not even as "evangelism." The Bible is written in living color, not in gray definitions. It centers on live people, not inert conceptions. We find "evangelist" as a Scriptural word, but not "evangelism." The nearest the Bible comes to the abstract concept is a phrase in Paul's Second Letter to Timothy (4:5). "Do the work of an evangelist," says Paul to his closest disciple. But what kind of work is that? What do evangelists do according to Scripture?

Once again the eager student who combs the Bible for simple specifics is going to be disappointed. There are surprisingly few references to evangelists in the Bible, and only fragmentary descriptions of their work. The word "evangelist" occurs just three times, as we shall see when we consider the question, "Who is the evangelist?" in our third lecture.

When the Bible speaks of evangelism it uses, not nouns, but verbs. The stress is on action! The Biblical word is the verb, "evangelize." This is where our definition must begin.

1. Evangelism in the Bible is, first of all, preaching.

There are six different words which the Bible uses for the act of preaching. One means no more than making oneself heard (*laleo*), another means "announce" (*diaggelo*); others mean "advertise" (*kataggelo*), and

“argue” (dialegomai). There is also the great word “to herald” or “proclaim” (kerusso), from which we derive our current theological favorite, the *kerugma*. But “the greatest word of all,” sums up Max Warren in his description of these words, “the greatest word of all is evangelize (euaggelidzo)...”(4)

This is what the angels did. They evangelized. They brought glad tidings of great joy (euaggelidzo), and the shepherds watching their flocks by night heard the good news (the evangel) of a Saviour. This is also what the Saviour did. Jesus evangelized. He came preaching. His message was the good news (the evangel) of the Kingdom of God. Paul, too, describes his own ministry as preaching, or evangelizing. “I would remind you, brethern, in what terms I preached to you the gospel (literally, how I evangelized you.)” (I Cor. 15:1-2 NEB).

Evangelism in the Bible, then, is primarily preaching. It is a ministry of the spoken word. This is why I cannot quite agree with those who identify evangelism with what some are now calling “the Christian presence,” though that too is an important ministry. There is much to be said for the quiet, pervasive influence of “the Christian presence” in the world, a presence which does not offend by frontal dogmatic assault, but penetrates as silently as salt or light, without the spoken word. This is good; this is important; this is necessary. But this is not evangelism. It may be an indispensable preparation for evangelism, but it is no substitute for evangelism. Jesus was thirty years in Nazareth as a Christian presence. But the good news was not carpentry. It was not until Jesus left his carpentry and came preaching, not until the word was spoken, that the good news was heard and understood. Until then the blind did not see and the deaf did not hear. Until then the poor were not evangelized. It takes the word, not just the deed, to evangelize, according to the Bible. Evangelism is the specific, articulate presentation of the person and claims of Jesus Christ. It is literally “preaching of Jesus,” or “telling the good news about Jesus.” This is how the verb evangelize is used in Scripture (e.g., Acts 8:35; 11:20).

2. But, secondly, evangelism in the Bible is more than preaching. It is **preaching with power.**

If evangelism is what the angels, and Jesus and the disciples did, as they told the good news, it is more than what we today call preaching. There was a *charisma*, a power in it. There were “signs following,” as the gospel of Mark suggests (16:17). At Bethlehem with the angels, there was a sign in the sky and a brighter sign in the manger. There were signs and wonders as Jesus announced his “evangel of the Kingdom.” In the preaching of the apostles, there were similar “signs following.”

Evangelism in the strangely upsetting world of the Bible is thunder and lightning, and leaping, healing power. And we Presbyterians shift vaguely and uncomfortably in our pews when we are reminded of it. I do myself. But I have discovered from experience that whenever the Bible makes me uncomfortable, in the end the trouble always turns out to be in me, and

not in the Bible.

The signs, the rushing manifestations of the power of the Spirit, may make me uncomfortable, but I believe in them because I believe the Bible, and more importantly, because I believe in the Holy Spirit. My father believed in them also because he saw them. He was a missionary pioneer, opening up vast tracts of North Korea to the very first impact of the gospel. His evangelistic labors, therefore, more nearly resembled those of the apostles than do mine, and he saw the signs. He had no special gifts himself. He was not even a revivalist. But he saw the Spirit at work in power in the great revival of 1907, and the Church in Korea has never been the same since. "It was a great sign and wonder....," wrote a Korean minister. "I saw some struggling to get up, then falling back in agony. Others again bounded to their feet to rid their souls of some long-covered sin. It seemed unwise that such confessions be made...But there was no help for it. We were under a mysterious and awful power, helpless..." In those great days, to the preaching was added the power; and that was evangelism.

My father saw and believed in those signs of power. But he did not make the mistake of confusing the "signs" with the gospel. I have heard him tell the story of one of the greatest of the Korean evangelists. This man, he was convinced, had the gift of healing. But one day the man surprised him with the announcement that he was giving up his healing ministry. "Why?" he was asked. "Because God has called me to evangelize, but people are now beginning to come to me not to be evangelized but only to be healed." When the "signs" turn men's minds to their bodies, or to anything other than Christ, they are no longer the power of the gospel. They have become hindrances to the gospel.

The New Testament signs of power had this major function. They attested to Christ that men might believe. When John doubted and wondered if Jesus was really the one he was waiting for, Jesus simply pointed to the signs: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor are evangelized..." This is the primary and indispensable Biblical link between witness and service, between evangelism and good works, between the social gospel, if you will, and the preached gospel—for the two belong together in Scripture. It is only our sectarian and unbiblical separation of the two into mutually hostile camps—preaching evangelicals against social gospel activists—that traps both sides into an indefensible posture. It polarizes and divides the preaching and the action, the word and the deed, with the tragic result that too often neither side is any longer Biblically evangelizing. If I believe I am evangelizing simply by preaching; and you believe you are evangelizing simply by acting for racial justice, we are both partly right, but we are both wrong. The preaching and the good works are never, never to be isolated, one from the other. Preaching is not done in a vacuum. The Christian who does nothing for racial justice had better not try to preach in Africa. On the other hand, however socially active he may be, if he is

silent about Jesus Christ, he is basically not communicating Jesus Christ. Evangelism in the Bible is preaching with the power of "signs following," namely, mighty acts.

It is possible that I have overreached myself by equating good works and Christian service with the signs of Pentecostal power. But I would remind you again of Jesus' own words. When John doubted, what were the signs he pointed to? "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed." These are good works. I would further observe that it is as much of a mistake to limit the power of the Spirit to its more dramatically Pentecostal manifestations as to deny the existence of such manifestations. The Spirit "worketh when, where and how he wishes." Healing is no less valid a sign and a wonder when it takes place quietly in a hospital in the name of Christ, than when it occurs suddenly in the court of the temple or at the altar rail. In fact, in the history of modern missions, the medical doctor has often out-evangelized not only the faith healer, but also the Christian preacher. Only, however, when the healing is not separated from "the name," and the power not separated from the preaching.

Sixty years ago in Taegu, Korea, there was just one medical doctor, a missionary, in a tiny, inadequate hospital. Today there is still only one American medical missionary there, though when my brother returns from furlough to his hospital there will be two. But there are also in that hospital today one hundred and twenty qualified Korean medical doctors. Every one of them is a Christian. Everyone also belongs to the hospital's Preaching Society. For it is the business of those Christian doctors to be able not only to minister to human needs with their highly technical medical skills, but also to be able to say a good word for Jesus Christ. On weekends, teams of doctors and nurses fan out into the countryside where no medical care is available. The mobile clinic carries them into villages where during the day they give free medical care to the needy, and in the evening the same doctors and nurses assist the hospital chaplain in an evangelistic service. It is no surprise to me that out of this Biblical welding of the word and the work have sprung up more than one hundred and twenty new churches in the Taegu area.

The objection has often been made, that to bring good works in this way into the service of evangelism is to twist Christian service out of its true shape as a beautiful, unselfish end in itself, and to debase it into a cold and calculating tool of proselytism. But in the Bible good works are not an end in themselves. That kind of thinking comes from Greek philosophy, not the Christian faith.

Perversion comes only when the preaching or the power, the word or the work, witnesses to self and not to Christ. Several years ago John Coventry Smith told the story of a conversation between Howard Lowry, the late President of Wooster College, and Dr. Radhakrishnan, the Hindu philosopher who became President of India. Lowry remarked that he was sometimes embarrassed by the Christian claim of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, which is at the heart of evangelistic preaching. To say to India,

where only ten million out of four hundred million are Christians, "Jesus Christ is the light of the world"—isn't that arrogance? Is not that a subtle form of exalting ourselves, as if to say, "We only have the light." Dr. Radhakrishnan paused and thought and replied, "Yes, but the Christian has no choice. This is what your scriptures say; you cannot say less. You are saved from arrogance when you say it in the spirit of Jesus Christ."

The Hindu philosopher was right. The Christian has no choice. He must evangelize; which is to preach Christ. He must preach with power, with signs following; which is to bring Christian action into the service of the Christian word. For to take service out of the context of evangelism is to take it out of the will of God, who "is not willing that any should perish." But he must do both in the spirit of Christ.

3. This, however, carries us beyond the preaching and the power to a third point the Bible makes about evangelism. Evangelism in the Bible is not only **preaching** and **preaching with power**. It is **preaching with power for a purpose**. Its purpose is to turn men to Jesus Christ.

This is the purpose both of the signs and of the preaching. When John recounts the signs and wonders, the mighty acts of Jesus, he adds, "Many other signs truly did Jesus...but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30-31). In Peter's sermon at Pentecost he is not just presenting truth **about** Jesus Christ, but presenting that truth in order to secure a decision **for** Christ. He begins with the facts, but the facts lead to an appeal, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus." (Acts 2:38). Paul and Barnabas at Iconium "**spoke to such purpose**," says Luke, "that a large body both of Jews and Greeks became believers." (Acts 14:1 NEB).

John Oman of Cambridge comments, "No discourse is really edifying unless all of it is concerned with stirring the heart and touching the conscience and moving the will, and the final word should be to clench the nail..." Don't try to impress, he says. Seek only to persuade.⁽⁵⁾ And James Black puts it quite bluntly. "Your business," he says to preachers, "is serious gunfire with a target."⁽⁶⁾ Yes, evangelism is preaching with power for a purpose.

The Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches stated that purpose in no uncertain terms: "so making Christ known to men that each is confronted with the necessity of a personal decision, Yes or No." And The Evanston Assembly repeated it just as clearly: "(Evangelism is) the bringing of persons to Christ as Saviour and Lord that they may share in His eternal life. Here is the heart of the matter. There must be personal encounter with Christ...For on his relationship to God in Christ depends the eternal destiny of man."

This and this alone is the purpose of evangelism. I must insist at this point, with Dr. Chalmers, that we keep our axes sharp, and our definitions straight. We are talking about evangelism. There are other equally important things Christians can and must talk about, such as what the person

who has come to God in Christ must do in the church and in the world, but it only confuses the matter to call everything evangelism. The 179th General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church did great service when, in partial contradiction of World Council statements at Tambaram and Amsterdam, it recognized a distinction between mission and evangelism. "All evangelism is mission," the Assembly said, "but all mission is not necessarily evangelism."

There is a broad view of the task of the Christian church which is perfectly legitimate. This is mission. And there is a focus on the cutting edge of that mission: that is evangelism.

The Church's mission is to do God's will in the world. It is as broad as that. It exists to do His will and to accomplish His purpose. Anything that serves to accomplish His purpose is the mission of the Church.

It will be arrogant for me, coming as I do from overseas, to try to define your mission in America for you. But when I apply that yardstick to an analysis of my mission in Asia, which is my part of the world, I am drawn inescapably to some very broad and sweeping conclusions:

Most of the people in Asia will go to bed hungry tonight. That kind of hunger cannot be the complete will of God. Therefore, it is my mission to feed them.

Most of the people in Asia live in grinding poverty. The average factory wage in the U.S.A. is about \$2.60 an hour. In Korea it is 8¢ an hour. That kind of poverty cannot be the complete will of God. It is my mission to help them.

Most of the people in Asia are sick. A Korean dies of tuberculosis every ten minutes. That kind of sickness cannot be the complete will of God. It is my mission to try to heal them.

All this is the mission of the Church in Asia. It is God's will, and the Christian who forgets this broad view of his task is in peril of being only half a Christian.

But the Christian who does only this is in far more deadly peril. He is in peril of being no Christian at all. It is not enough to say:

Asia is hungry; feed it.

Asia is poor; help it.

Asia is sick; heal it.

All that is true, and it is an important part of our mission. But communists, too, feed and teach and help and heal. That does not make their mission a Christian mission. What makes our mission Christian is a response to a deeper, more insistent, more urgent need. Most of the people in Asia have never known salvation in Jesus Christ, and to meet this deepest need of the human soul demands the focusing of the Christian mission at the purposive point of evangelism; which is preaching with power to make Christ known and to persuade men to receive Him.

When the preaching combines the right power with the right purpose, it will have results. At Pentecost, "There were added that day about three

thousand souls." I am reminded of an African parallel. I once saw the report of a black evangelist: "We did not begin to preach," he wrote, "until we had called for the power of God. That power came. We took it and went forth to preach. And people came confessing Jesus like the fish of the sea in number."

But if your ministry is anything like mine, you know as well as I that it is not always like this. People do not always come "confessing Jesus like the fish of the sea in number," even when the preaching is with power and purpose. There is a fourth point the Bible makes about evangelism which we must note carefully.

4. Biblical evangelism is more than preaching with power and purpose. It is **preaching with a strategy.**

Perhaps "preaching" is the wrong word. It does not quite catch all the rich variety of what the Bible means by the word, "evangelize." Granted that "euaggelidzo" is usually translated "preaching", the word is too stiff. The angels did not preach; they sang as they proclaimed. Perhaps a more inclusive word would be better. "Communicate" is overworked, I know, but it is more flexible. Biblical evangelism is communicating the gospel with power, and purpose, and more, **with a strategy.**

When the strategy calls for it, evangelism is nothing more dramatic than personal conversation. Jesus evangelized the woman at the well not by standing up on it and preaching to her, but by asking her for a drink of water, then talking with her. When he evangelized Nicodemus, the great evangelistic phrase, "You must be born again," was not thundered from a pulpit. It was said in secret, to a young Pharisee who came to him by night for a very private conversation.

This was my father's method. "Talk, eat, sleep and think the Gospel all day and every day," he said, "in natural, informal contact with anyone and everyone..."⁽⁷⁾ To the end of his life he refused to buy a car. "It will take me too fast, past too many Koreans I want to talk to," he said. This is personal evangelism. It is strategy, method. Remember how Jesus called his first disciples. Remember how he converted Zacchaeus.

But it is not the only strategy. Jesus also had a dramatic ministry to multitudes. So did Peter at Pentecost and Finney, and Moody and so does Billy Graham. Jesus was mobbed and surrounded and crowded and pushed and adulated by the multitudes. So beset was he by the crowds that at times he had to escape from them by boat. But he evangelized them. He spoke to 4,000 at a time. Again to 5,000. Mass evangelism is as Biblical as personal witness and vice versa.

There is a direct integrating relationship, I believe, between the two. Before Jesus spoke to thousands, he spoke to twelve. Before Palm Sunday he had spoken to a woman at a well, to a publican up a tree. Before the great ingathering at Pentecost, the apostles had gone out two by two into the quiet villages. Before revival fire swept Pyongyang in 1907, missionaries had been living with the people for fifteen years. "I am situated

just...as I have long wished to be: in direct contact with the people..." one of them wrote in 1892. "(I am) living in their midst, meeting them every day and all day...sometimes in ways not easy to endure. (But) I am making friends and...doing a great deal of personal work..."⁽⁸⁾ "It is obvious that he loved the people he had gone to live with," adds a historian. In fact, that same historian, Roy Shearer, credits the wildfire growth of the church in Korea more to personal witness than to revivals.⁽⁹⁾ In the history of the church more people have been won to Christ by such quiet ways than in great mass meetings. But both are evangelism. The strategy of evangelism determines the method, the method does not define evangelism.

In the Biblical pattern, personal witness usually precedes public proclamation and the great mass gatherings. Much of the success of the Billy Graham campaigns lies in the fact that he follows this pattern. The campaigns are preceded by months of careful preparation and personal witness. All this belongs to the strategy of evangelism.

To sum up the strategy of pulpit evangelism, "preaching to the multitudes," and the strategy of personal evangelism, "winning them one by one," are both Biblically sound and neither should be discounted or neglected.

In the five dramatic years of the Korean revival, from 1903-08, the membership of the churches in Korea increased four-fold. No better argument had ever been made for the Christian faith than the cleansing change that revival wrought in the lives of the believers. Christians went from house to house, confessing their sins to those they had wronged. Stolen goods were returned; wrongs made right; lies and slanders confessed and corrected. Wives brought their husbands; sons their parents; families brought whole villages to Christ.

But don't call any strategy "evangelism" if you are not willing to try it. For evangelism is not a theory. It is not a concept. It is not a definition. It is more than all of these put together. In the New Testament, the word is a verb, and a verb spells action. The greatest word of all is still, "euaggelizō"—to evangelize!

(1). J. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out*, p. 14

(2). *ibid.*

(3). *Oxford Dict. of Etymology*

(4). Max Warren, *The Christian Imperative*, pp. 15-21

(5). quoted, J.T. Stone, *Winning Men*, p. 29

(6). quoted by Byran Green in *The Practice of Evangelism*, p. 85

(7). S.A. Moffett, "Policy and Methods for the Evangelization of Korea," *The Chinese Recorder*, May 1906

(8). S.A. Moffett, in *Annual Report of the Board*, N.Y. 1894

(9). R. Shearer, *Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea*, p. 111ff.

II. What is the Evangel?

A distinguished visitor was speaking through an interpreter to a Korean audience. "What is patriotism?" he asked, and paused dramatically. "What is patriotism?" he asked again. Then rising to his climax, he shouted, "Patriotism is love of country". Even in English that is not too impressive a climax, but in Korean it was a disaster. For the word "patriotism" in Korean is literally "love of country", and what he had asked the interpreter to do was to cry dramatically, "What is love of country? What is love of country? Love of country is love of country."

Some of you may have felt I came perilously close to that kind of tautology in my first lecture. "What is evangelism?" I asked. And I answered, quite correctly, "Evangelism is evangelizing: preaching the evangel—with a power, with a purpose, and with a strategy." But this really does not mean very much, does it, until we face up to the more basic question: If evangelism is preaching the evangel, what is the evangel?

The first answer to that question is a six-letter Anglo-Saxon word. The evangel is the gospel. In their direct, no-nonsense way the Anglo-Saxons gave the Greek word its exact equivalent in their own language: "good spiel" or "gospel". How much more common sense they had than some of us. "Gospel" has such a nice pious ring to it, — how we love it — but we forget that it probably means as little to the average man today as the Greek "evangel" did to the Anglo-Saxons. Today's word is not "evangel", not even "gospel"; for modern man the word is "good news". It is a good lesson in evangelism to note that when the American Bible Society called its latest edition of the New Testament just that,—“Good News for Modern Man”,—it had a runaway best seller on its hands in less than a month. The "evangel" is not given to be hidden behind the religious jargon of ecclesiastical Greek or Latin or even Anglo-Saxon. The evangel is the good news.

It is what the angel said at Bethlehem. "Don't be afraid; I have good news for you..." (Lk. 2:10 NEB). It is what Jesus preached from village to village in Galilee: "the good news of the Kingdom of God" (Lk. 8:1). It was what brought Paul to his feet unafraid before the kings and governors of Rome—an unprepossessing little man from a conquered race, but "I am not ashamed of the good news," he said.

There are three key Biblical proclamations of the good news: the angelic, the Messianic, and the apostolic. Any Biblical definition of the evangel must encompass all three. Let me begin with the apostolic.

1. **The apostolic evangel.** Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel (the evangel, the good news)". But why wasn't he? He was a Roman, writing to Rome. Was not the gospel a ridiculous thing for a Roman to be preaching:—"full of nonsense about love and meekness and humility and turning the other cheek, and a god who died like a criminal!" Rubbish for slaves or for women, not for world-conquering Romans. That was Rome's attitude, self-sufficient, powerful. Its standard was the eagle; its symbols the axe and the short sword. Not the cross. Rome wanted victory, not

sacrifice; power, not meekness.

So Paul stood up and said to Rome, "The good news I have for you is power". This is the first characteristic of the apostolic evangel. It is power. "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation.." As a creedal Calvinist with propositional theological tendencies, I find that I often need this explosive reminder that there is a dynamic and a movement in the good news that will not suffer the compressions and containments of any creed, however true. It is precisely because the evangel is, first of all, power, that evangelism, which is the proclaiming of the evangel, can never be equated, as some would have it, with the cold, clear transmission of orthodoxy to the unbeliever.

This is not to minimize the indispensable nature of truth. But in the Bible, evangelism begins with power because the evangel is power. Not only with Paul in Romans. Consider also the significant sequence in the great commissioning scene which opens the Acts of the Apostles. How does Jesus make his first evangelists? First, says Luke, "he showed himself alive" to them "by many infallible proofs" (1:3). But that was not enough. The "infallible proofs" did not make them evangelists. They knew they were still not prepared, and asked for more **information**. But Jesus rebuked them. Knowledge does not make evangelists, either. "It is not for you to know..." Jesus said (1:7). The evangel is not inside information about "times and seasons;" it is not "infallible proofs". It is power. Jesus said, "You shall receive power...and be my witnesses." (1:8).

The power of the Spirit received—the power of a personal encounter with God—this is the good news of the evangel. So Paul, remembering a cataclysmic moment on the Road to Damascus, says, "I am not ashamed of the good news, for it is the power of God unto salvation." The good news, however, is not always cataclysmic, for experiences will differ. With Wesley at Aldersgate the experience was only "a warming of the heart." The good news is not the experience, but the power. It is "good news of salvation", says Paul and that, as Barclay remarks in his commentary on that phrase in Eph. 1:13, "is news of that power which wins us forgiveness from past sin, liberation from present sin, strength for the future to conquer sin. It is good news of victory.

This is heady stuff. It is as exciting as the taste of new wine. No old bottles will be able to contain it. I like and I preach the old words—ransom, justification, satisfaction, reconciliation. They are all true and Biblical. But they are essentially theological, and it can be as much of a mistake to confuse theology with evangelism as to mistake social service for evangelism. The word for the evangel—the word for today, is power. Not black power, or student power, or flower power; but God power. "I am not ashamed of the good news, for it is the power of God." The evangel is power.

2. But, secondly, the evangel is **fact**. Having said so emphatically that the evangel is power, it is imperative to add quickly, and just as emphatically,

that the evangel is also fact, and it is the business of theology to help us distinguish fact from fiction in the evangel. When the Reformation was being criticized for lack of saints' bones and wonders and miracles, Calvin dryly remarked that Satan also has his miracles, "to delude the ignorant and inexperienced. Magicians and enchanters have always been famous for miracles", he observed.⁽¹⁾

Evangelism may be power, and not theology, but the same apostle who was so excited about the power of the gospel, as he begins his letter to the Romans, goes on in that same epistle to write twelve of the most closely reasoned theological chapters in all of Scripture. Paul was the greatest evangelist in history not only because he had power, but because he had learning. So many charismatic movements fail at this point. They speak with the power of the Spirit, so they say. How strange that through them the Spirit does not say anything theologically worth remembering.

I said also, that "infallible proofs" do not make evangelists. Power does. That is true. But if the evangelist's evangel is not true to the facts, it is not good news at all. It is only wishful thinking, or false propaganda, which is even worse. A few months after we had been overrun by the communists in Peking, I heard of a slogan they had posted in huge characters across the walls of a bookstore in Tientsin. It was a warning, I suppose, against what they called "dangerous thoughts". The slogan was this: "Any fact which is not in accord with revolutionary theory is not a true fact." Without tongue in cheek, the Christian can say: "Any preaching which is not in accord with the facts is not the true evangel." "What the apostles preached," says James Stewart, "was neither a philosophy of life nor a theory of redemption. They preached events. They anchored their Gospel to history".⁽²⁾

The classic apostolic capsule of the facts of the evangel is in I Corinthians, chapter 15. There Paul writes: "Do you remember the terms in which I preached the gospel to you...? First and foremost, I handed on to you the facts..." (vs. 2,3). The facts he chooses as his summary of the good news are the two most fundamental facts of all existence: death, and life. In Christian symbolism they are portrayed by the cross and the crown. There is no evangel without both these facts.

a. The first fact of the good news is death.

There is this much at least to be said for Paul: he tells it like it is. Someone has remarked that he was truly "called to be an ambassador" but he was no diplomat. He breaks all the rules of modern preaching and begins with the last thing men want to hear about—death.

But where else can we honestly begin in a world like ours. The one big brutal fact of modern life is death. Some, like the secular existentialists, say that death is the only really meaningful fact, for life has lost its meaning. That is not true, but death is at least an inescapable fact. The hand on the clock of this Atomic Scientists Bulletin - the hand that marks the death of the world, the nuclear holocaust, stands now at seven minutes to twelve, the closest the world has been to death, the scientists think,

since 1953⁽³⁾.

If the good news must begin with the facts, perhaps death is as good a fact as any with which to begin. It is a fact man had better learn to recognize and accept. But I must confess that there have been times when I thought Paul was a little too blunt about it. I have been tempted to play more lightly with the word "evangel". I wanted to cry out that it means "good news", not bad. I wanted to preach of the love of God, not of sin and death.

My intentions were good. And I was partly right. More right, I think, than those evangelists of doom who enjoy preaching about sin and death and all the fires of hell. It was D.L. Moody, a better evangelist than they, who said, "Don't preach about hell if you can do it without tears."

Yes, my heart was in the right place, but I was wrong if I thought I could leave death out of the gospel, for death is the first fact of the good news, says Paul.

But where is the good news in death? Chesterton tells of standing on the Mount of Olives with Father Waggett, looking down at Calvary. "Well, anyhow," said Father Waggett unexpectedly, "it must be obvious to anybody that the doctrine of the Fall is the only cheerful view of human life." Chesterton was startled for a moment, until he reflected that it is the only cheerful view because it is the only profound view.⁽⁴⁾

But there is even more cheer than that in the evangel's "fact of death". The first fact of the gospel, as Paul sums it up (in I Cor. 15,) is Christ's death, not the sinner's. Or, as that remarkably durable Puritan, John Owen, put it three hundred years ago: the good news is "the death of death in the death of Christ."⁽⁵⁾

The good news is that the hard facts of sin and death are never isolated in the Biblical evangel apart from the love of God, and the deepest proof of that love is "that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8). The Bible does not dodge the fact that sin causes death. "The wages of sin is death". (Rom. 6:23). But its spotlight is not on man's death by sin, but on Christ's death for sin. That is the good news.

If this be so, the evangelist can never, never be vindictive. He must present the facts without apology, but also in love, without condemnation. Paul Little⁽⁶⁾ tells how a drunk bumped into Charles Trumbull on the train. He was "spewing profanity and filth." He lurched into the seat beside Trumbull and offered him a swallow from his flask. Trumbull started to shrink back. A lesser man might have blasted the man for his sins and condition, but instead Trumbull politely declined the drink and said, "No thank you, but I can see you are a very generous man." The man's eyes lit up, and it was the beginning of a conversation that brought the man to the Saviour. That is evangelism. It communicates the good news which is not condemnation but salvation. Over against the hard facts of sin and death, it places another fact: that "God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." (Jn. 3:17).

b. There is a second fact in the gospel. The greatest fact is not death but life; that Christ, who died for our sins, "was raised to life". The first fact is the cross. The second fact is the empty tomb and the crown of life. Let us make sure our evangel contains both these facts. "To preach only the atonement, the death apart from the life," says P.T. Forsyth, "or only the person of Christ, the life apart from the death....is all equally one-sided and extreme to (the point of) falsity".⁽⁷⁾

There is more than a careful balance between these two facts in the gospel. There is movement. The dynamic of the gospel is its movement **from death to life**. The Bible calls this salvation.

It should be noted that this is a reversal of man's normal understanding of history. The natural, mournful rhythm of existence as history records it is that man lives, and then he dies. Christian history turns this joyfully around: we were dead but now we have come alive. For "God who is rich in mercy, for the great love he bore us, brought us to life with Christ, even when we were dead in our sins—by his grace you are saved." (Eph. 2:4 NEB). We laugh at the "Brother, are you saved?" evangelistic cliché, but in a world where more and more people confess that they have somehow lost all sense of meaning in their lives, what more central question is there than, "Brother, are you really alive?" That is what "Saved" means. The good news is life: we have moved from death to life.

But as always in the evangel, the accent is on Christ. As only Christ's death makes of death good news, so only as Christ "was raised to life" do we have life. It took a miracle to wrench the course of history from its grim life-to-death inversion, and bring it back again from death to life. It took a miracle—the hinge-miracle of history,—the resurrection. Death is the first fact, but not the great fact. Not even the cross stands at the hinge. "No cross; no crown", said William Penn, for without the cross the gospel is a frothy thing. But, "no crown, no gospel", says Paul. "If Christ was not raised, then our gospel is null and void, and so is your faith" (I Cor. 15:14 NEB).

The new breed of theologians has been right at one point, at least. Without the resurrection, God is quite dead. But what they have not been so willing to recognize is that without God, man is just as dead. Without Him life first loses its meaning. Then it loses itself. Which is precisely how Malcolm Muggeridge, the acid-tongued social critic of our times describes the world of the imminent future: "psychiatric wards bursting at the seams", and "the suicide rate up to Scandinavian proportions" as we rise "on the plastic wings of Playboy magazines."⁽⁸⁾

First the loss of meaning "psychiatric wards"; then the loss of life "the soaring suicide rate". D.T. Niles puts it in more sober terms. "There are... attempts to make life meaningful apart from God. Existentialism is only the best known of these attempts. The Gospel answers that true meaning lies in the fact that we are the sons of God. There are attempts," he continues, "to direct man's struggle for food away from man's hunger for God. Communism is only the best known of these attempts. The Gospel

answers, living is not Life, for Life is to live with God.”⁽⁹⁾ The “good news of salvation” is life.

This, then, is the apostolic evangel: power, and death, and life. There is no evangelism without the fire, without the cross and without the crown.

II. The Messianic Evangel. But even earlier than the evangelism of the apostles was Jesus’ own evangelistic ministry. There is a direct relationship between the two, of course. They proclaimed what He did: their good news was His power, His death, His resurrection life. But there is also a significant difference. Jesus’ own evangel as he preached it in the villages of Galilee was focused on a part of the gospel which not all evangelists have recognized as evangelistic. What Jesus preached was “the evangel of the Kingdom”. And that is, in a sense, a social gospel. It is a prophetic gospel.

Perhaps we have not recognized it as the gospel because we have not wanted to. We complain that it confuses the issue. It takes the personal cutting edge from evangelism, the call for decision. It dilutes the spirit with politics? But kings are inescapably political, and Jesus is King!

What are we to do with Jesus’ evangel of the Kingdom? What he preached was more than personal salvation. The gospel of his Kingdom is “peace, integrity, community, harmony and justice”, as Hoekendijk so rightly declares.⁽¹⁰⁾ For the Kingdom is what the King came to establish, and he is “Prince of peace”, and “King of righteousness” (Isa. 9:6). All this may be social gospel, but it is no heresy. It is simply the affirmation of the lordship of Jesus Christ. It is as old as the oldest creed of the church, and it was the first gospel preached by the Church’s Lord, as recorded in chapter 4 of Luke’s Gospel: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:18, 19 R.S.V.).

The earliest creed of the church, Bible theologians tell us, was “Jesus is Lord.” This was an even older test of orthodoxy, apparently, than the beloved evangelistic companion phrase, “Jesus is Saviour”. Paul uses it as just such a test. “No one can say Jesus is Lord,” he writes to the Corinthians, “except by the Holy Spirit.” (I Cor. 12:3).

But once again let me run up the red flag of warning against separating the two statements. The Bible does not give us one creed for pious evangelists, “Jesus is Saviour”, and another creed for broad-minded activists, “Jesus is Lord”. The creed of the church and the teaching of Scripture is that “Jesus is Lord and Saviour”, and let not man put asunder what God has joined together. Bringing the two together reminds the evangelist that the broad ethics of the Kingdom are an essential part of the gospel. Bringing the two together reminds the activist that the boundaries of the Kingdom are not the boundaries of this world, that the Kingdom comes not by social reform but by the will of God and that men are called not to

establish the Kingdom but to enter it. "(Christ's) ethical teachings are the righteousness of that Kingdom," writes Dr. John Bright. "As such, of course, they are incumbent upon all the servants of the Kingdom. But by the same token they lie beyond men who do not acknowledge its lordship...To realize the ethics of the Kingdom it is first necessary that men submit to the rule of that Kingdom."⁽¹¹⁾ Calvin said the same thing, echoing the words of his Lord: "No one can enter the Kingdom of heaven except he who has been regenerated."⁽¹²⁾

In other words, no one can say "Jesus is Lord" who has not first said "Jesus is Saviour." The Messianic evangel calls for commitment both to Christ's person and to His program!

III. The Angelic Evangel. But earliest of all the evangels in the New Testament—earlier than the apostolic evangel, earlier than the Messianic—was the evangel of the angels. It is also the least complicated. The angels simply sang with joy: "Do not be afraid; I have good news for you: there is great joy coming to the whole people. Today in the city of David a deliverer has been born to you—the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:10 NEB).

The lost note in most of our evangelism is hilarity. The evangel is a theme for singing, and if we cannot sing it, it is not the gospel. It can be power and fact and ethics and invitation and all the rest, but take the joy out of it, and it does not really grip the heart.

And we? We take this lovely, fragile, hilarious, singable thing, the gospel—and argue it. Or we take this simple thing, the good news, and philosophize it. Some years ago a distinguished professor came to Korea. He wanted to preach. So Graham Lee, one of the early missionary evangelists, took him out to a little country church and prepared to interpret for him. The man's opening sentence was, "All thought is divided into two categories, the concrete and the abstract". Graham Lee took one look at that little country congregation, of toothless grandmothers, and sturdy farmers, and little children sitting on the bare, dirt floor, and instantly translated it, "I have come here all the way from America to tell you about the Lord Jesus Christ." And from that point on the sermon was firmly in the hands of the angels!

It is as simple as that—the gospel. If you cannot preach it, at least sing it. Proclaim it as truly and simply and as earnestly as you can. This world of ours is dying for the kind of happiness the "good-news" of the love of God in Christ has the power to give. *And the angels said "good news"*

(1). Calvin, *Inst.*, Dedication

(2). James Stewart, *Thine Is The Kingdom*, p. 29

(3). *Christianity Today*, Feb. 2, 1968, p. 31

(4). quoted, H.C. Alleman, *Christian Century*, Dec. 29, 1943, p. 1531

(5). John Owen, *The Death of Death*

(6). Paul Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith*, p. 43

(7). P.T. Forsyth, *The Cruciality of the Cross*, p. 42

(8). *Christianity Today*, Feb. 2, 1968, p. 54

(9). *That They May Have Life*, p. 39

(10). J. Hoekenrijk, *The Church Inside Out*, p. 21

(11). John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 221 f.

(12). J. Calvin, *Instruction in Faith*, Fuhrmann tr., p. 42 f., quoting John 3:3

III. Who is the Evangelist?

In discussing the Biblical background of evangelism we have asked two questions: What is Evangelism?, and What is the Evangel? My third question is, Who is the Evangelist?

Many people have tried to answer this question. To Sinclair Lewis the evangelist is an Elmer Gantry. To Leighton Ford he is "the Christian Persuader". To Sam Shoemaker he is "the one who stands by the door". To John Calvin he is a minister "inferior to the apostles in dignity, but next to them in office."⁽¹⁾

Suppose we ask history, Who is the evangelist?

Is he a Jonathan Edwards? In his study Edwards was the most original theological intellect America has yet produced. When he left the study and mounted the pulpit, he was an evangelist on fire. His sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" even when read from notes held in front of his eyes may well have been the most effective single evangelistic sermon preached since Pentecost. Is that the evangelist?

Or is he a John Wesley? A man simple, direct and only reluctantly exciting? Wesley's ministry, he himself said, was just this, "I offered Christ to the people". The electric flash, the nervous uproar that sparked through the crowds disturbed him. Only hesitantly did he take to open-air preaching. His brother Charles was even more opposed to emotionalism. If any are seized by uncontrollable impulses, he announced at one meeting, they will be taken at once to a corner of the room to be attended to.⁽²⁾ Is that the evangelist?

Or is the evangelist a Billy Sunday? A man who aimed for emotion, and who was anything but reluctant about showmanship. Sunday used his showmanship for the Lord, but went about it with a professional's attention to detail. For example, he used to fix an extra board an inch or so above the flat top of his pulpit, so that when he pounded the board would hit the pulpit and the dramatic crack could be heard to the farthest seat in the balcony. Is that the evangelist?

Or is he a Whitefield? A man with the voice of a professional actor, and the heart of a shepherd of souls? Whitefield, they say, could make people laugh or cry simply by the way he intoned the word "Mesopotamia". He could impress a thirteen-year-old boy and Benjamin Franklin with the same sermon. He preached so often on the text "You must be born again", that church leaders asked him to change it. His answer was, "I will when you are born again".⁽³⁾ I, for one, am glad he didn't change the text. The thirteen-year-old boy converted under his preaching in Newton, Long Island, was my great-great-grandfather.

Who is the evangelist? A deeply spiritual R.A. Torrey? A committed Anglican Bryan Green? An independent, Pentecostal-turned-Methodist Oral Roberts?

Or is he an eminently practical man like D.L. Moody? "Blessed are the money-raisers," said Moody, "for in heaven they shall stand next to the martyrs." John R. Mott called Moody the greatest evangelist of the last century. Why? Because he raised millions? No. But because everything he had was God's. "The world has yet to see what God will do with a man who is wholly consecrated to Him," he once heard a minister say. And Moody responded, "By the grace of God, I will be that man". Is that the evangelist?

History answers "Yes". These were all evangelists. But how do they compare with the Biblical pattern? What does the Bible tell us about the evangelist? Who is the evangelist in Scripture?

There is surprisingly little said about the evangelist, as such, in Scripture. The Bible uses the word only three times, and each time it is not a little surprising to find to whom it is Scripture gives that title.

In the first instance, the evangelist is a regular officer of the church. In the second instance, he is a social worker—a social worker who preaches Christ. And in the third reference, he is a bishop.

Look first at Paul's list of church ministries in Ephesians 4:11: "Some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." The evangelist today does not quite fit into our highly organized ecclesiastical machine. We do occasionally ordain an evangelist. But this often means the man just doesn't yet have a church. In the New Testament, however, the evangelist has apostolic blessing and holds a recognized position in the ministry of the church, along with apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers. He stands third in the list of the early church's five ministries in the Scripture quoted above.

There are other Biblical lists of gifts and ministries, however, in which the evangelist is not mentioned. In Romans 12:6 ff., Paul's five categories are "prophets, teachers, exhorters, givers of aid, and administrators." At first thought, the exhorter might seem to be the evangelist, but as Paul describes it, the exhorters ministry seems to be to believers, not unbelievers. Strictly speaking he is not an evangelist. Paul includes the ministries of social service and administration (*proistamenos*, vs. 8)—both of which, we do well to remember, are Biblical ministries—yet leaves out what seems to us so much more important, the ministry of evangelism. He does the same thing in I Corinthians (12:28 ff.): there, his list includes "apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, social servants, administrators, and speakers in tongues." But no evangelists, at least none so named.

Does this suggest an indifference in Scripture to the work of the evangelist? Not in the least. It may suggest a certain indifference to organization, and a flexibility of structure in the early church. It may indicate a lack of emphasis on the evangelist's particular rank in the church's table of

organization. But although Scripture may not emphasize the evangelist's title, it is full to overflowing with the importance of his work.

In a second Scriptural reference to an "evangelist", the Bible speaks of "Philip the evangelist". "We went to the home of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven, and stayed with him," says Luke. (Acts 21:8). Philip's work is described elsewhere in Acts. First he is in Samaria "preaching Christ", Luke says; then on the road to Gaza, again "preaching Jesus", this time to an Ethiopian; note that he is preaching to non-Jews in both cases. (Acts 8:5; 8:35 f.).

The unexpected element in this reference, from our point of view, is that Philip was a social worker. He was "one of the Seven," a deacon, set aside to take care of the social responsibilities of that early Christian community. In a day when the call to evangelism is often interpreted as a call for the evangelist to turn social worker, it is well to note that in this particular Biblical reference, Philip the social worker is called to turn evangelist. But the Bible, as we have pointed out before, in its balanced way, ~~does not separate evangelism and social work~~. The Spirit calls the same man, Philip, to both. He cared for widows; he fed the hungry. He was ordained a deacon. But when the call came, he was also an evangelist. He preached Christ to strangers!

The man was the same, but the ministries were different. Christian service, the *diakonia*, is not evangelism; nor is evangelism service. When we say that the two are the same, it is usually only an excuse for neglecting one or the other. It was precisely because the Christian church, if it would remain wholly Christian, could neglect neither evangelism nor service that an order of deacons was ordained by the Spirit. Deacons served, and apostles evangelized. But lest this in turn lead service-minded Christians into the disastrous delusion that evangelism is an option for some, not an imperative for all, an angel of the Lord calls Philip the deacon to evangelize: "Start out and go south to the road that leads down from Jerusalem to Gaza" (Acts 8:36). And when he saw on the road an unbeliever in a carriage, the Spirit said, "Evangelize...Go and join the carriage".

There is a wholeness in the Christian mission which carries a double command. To some Christians, caught up too easily in a third-heaven ecstasy of their own pursuit of souls, it comes as a call back into the real world of stomach hunger and unpaid rent and racial injustice. "Wait on tables," it says to them. To others, carried by their own emotions and by their own sense of Christian responsibility to minister to the physical needs of humanity, as if this ministry were all that mattered, it comes as a call back to the equally real world of personal evangelism, "Join the carriage", it says. To every Christian, at one time or another, the Spirit issues both commands: "Wait on tables," and "Get out on the road, join the carriage". Philip the deacon was also Philip the evangelist!

The third reference in Scripture to an "evangelist" is in II Timothy 4:5. Here Paul tells a bishop to be an evangelist, a piece of advice I have often

longed to repeat. "Do the work of an evangelist", says Paul to Timothy, first bishop of Ephesus.

How appropriate that of the only two men specified in Scripture as evangelists, one was a deacon, and the other a bishop. Does this not mean that any Christian may be an evangelist?

Some people disagree. My good friend Paul Verghese, with whom I am usually in complete agreement, in a recent paper, said virtually, "No evangelizing without a license." "Evangelism is one of the charismatic ministries of the church," he wrote, "not its whole ministry." I have no quarrel with that. But he went on to say, "That was the error of our forefathers—the slogan 'every Christian an evangelist'—which so cheapened the gospel that the world can no longer listen to it with respect. To proclaim the gospel to the unbeliever is a special calling of some in the church. And those who are called to be evangelists by the Holy Spirit should be commissioned by the church to do so..."⁽⁴⁾

I would agree with all that he says about the special call and office of "evangelist". This is what is described in the Biblical references we have just cited. Let me summarize it briefly:

1. The evangelist, as an officer or minister of the church, is specially called, and charismatically endowed. Timothy, we are told, was given a special grace, or gift. (I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6). Philip was called by "an angel of the Lord", and signs and miracles accompanied his mass evangelism in Samaria (Acts 8:36; 8:6).

2. The evangelist, as an officer or minister of the church, is also specially commissioned by the church and set apart for the ministry of evangelism. Timothy received the gift "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery". It was as evangelists, probably, that Paul and Barnabas were commissioned at Antioch, when the Spirit said to the church, "Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them." And the church "fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them (and) sent them away." (Acts 13:1-3)⁽⁵⁾

But it is a misinterpretation of Scripture to limit the vocation of evangelist in the early church to those alone who bore the name and title, specially called and church-commissioned. There was no such rigidity of function in that dynamic, vital, growing early church. The title appears only three times in Scripture, but there are evangelists everywhere.

The first, perhaps, was Andrew, who brought his own brother to Christ (Jn. 1:42). The other apostles were also all evangelists. Later there were the Seventy whom Jesus sent forth two by two. (Luke 10:1 ff.).

Then came a breakthrough, a turning point in the history of the church. It transformed evangelism from its narrower definition as the ministry of the apostles to a broader base as an injunction for all believers. It is described in the eighth chapter of the Book of Acts. Persecution broke the church out of its Judaic mould, and, at the same time broke the ministry

of evangelism out of its apostolic mould. The Christians were scattered from Jerusalem out into the cities of the Samaritans and the Greeks. The apostles, however, remained in Jerusalem. It was their followers who were scattered, and it was they who now became evangelists. "All except the apostles were scattered, and those who were scattered went through the country preaching the Word" (Acts 8:1-4).

From this experience of the New Testament church we learn that beyond the special call and the particular commissioning, there is a general directive to evangelism in Scripture that no Christian can escape. In addition, there is the specific directive of "The Great Commission."

In some quarters it has become fashionable of late to question the command of Christ as the basis for mission and evangelism. Certain scholars have questioned the validity of the text. Interpreters have criticized the attitude of blind obedience as a motive for mission. But today's New Testament scholarship is rediscovering the validity and authority of the Great Commission. In his book, *Mission in the New Testament*, Prof. (Ferdinand) Hahn of Heidelberg and Kiel, asks the question, "Did Jesus during his lifetime actually commission his disciples to go out?" And he answers, on the basis of a study of many texts. (Mk. 6:7-11; Lk. 9:1-5; 10:1-12; Matt. 9:37 f.; 10:5-16; etc.) "There can be no doubt about it,"⁽⁶⁾ Karl Barth agrees: "As recapitulation and anticipation, revealing the hidden reality of the eschatological community, the great commission is truly the most genuine utterance of the risen Jesus."⁽⁷⁾

Biblically, then, "Every Christian is an evangelist". This is what Jesus commends his disciples to do. And historically, instead of cheapening the gospel, that kind of evangelism increased its stature and enlarged its influence. Only the non-Christian critics complained. The pagan Celsus felt it was completely unfair of Christians that even workers in wool and leather, and fullers, "laid hold of women and children and instructed them in the...Christian faith..."⁽⁸⁾

Eusebius tells how Pantaenus, the learned head of the catechetical school in Alexandria, which was the church's first theological seminary, left his school for a while to go as an evangelist to India as early as the third century.

The church needs all kinds of evangelists. The Spirit calls all kinds. We need the power of apostolic preaching, the shaking, the "turning of the world upside down," the revitalizing of the church in the ministry of the great evangelists. But we also need the cumulative power of multitudes of individual witnesses for Christ. This was how the church grew in the first centuries. It is how the church grew in Korea. My father saw it send a nation "on the run to God". "A church constantly at work seeking to convert men-peddlers carrying books and preaching as they travel, merchants and inn-keepers talking to customers and guests, travellers along the roads and on the ferries telling of Jesus and His salvation, women going to the fields, drawing water at the well, washing clothes at the brooks, or visiting in heathen homes, all talking of the Gospel and what it has done

for them, is a method of evangelization than which none is more powerful.”

In some Korean churches Christians were not admitted to full membership until they had brought others to Christ. “How do we know you really love the Lord Jesus,” the pastor would say, “if you do not tell others about Him.” It is still true that the secret of the growth of the Korean church, which has doubled again in membership since 1950, is not the missionary, nor even the Korean pastor, but the contagious, continuous witness of lay Christians.

This is also the key to one of the most encouraging new strategies of evangelism, as it has been developed in Latin America. It is called “Evangelism-in-Depth.” Dayton Roberts describes it in his book **Revolution in Evangelism**. Its central principle, as formulated by Ken Strachan: “The growth of any movement is in direct proportion to the success of that movement in mobilizing its total membership in the constant propagation of its beliefs.”⁽⁹⁾ Instead of looking for larger and larger audiences for a central evangelist, Evangelism in Depth tries to multiply the number of witnesses. “Too often,” says Roberts, “our churches are like an Oriental sampan—it has only one oar, so one man rows hard while everyone else rides as a passenger. A better picture of the Christian church would be a racing shell, or a war canoe, with an oar in the hands of each person on board. There are no passengers in Evangelism—only crew members! The child may need a smaller oar, but everyone does his part!”⁽¹⁰⁾

Everyone does his part. In our Seoul newspaper a few weeks ago I read an account, reprinted from **Guideposts**, written by an insurance company president about a business flight he took one week to Chicago. What caught my eye was the way he said he begins every flight. As he drops into his seat he says, “Lord, if there is anybody on this plane you want me to talk to, let him take the seat beside me.” This time it was the stewardess who sat next to him at take-off, and she looked upset. “What’s the matter?” Mott asked. And she gasped, “Does it show?” She hesitated a moment, then said, “The man I was going to marry ran off with another woman.” “Well,” said Mott unsentimentally, “why don’t you thank the Lord and get yourself a good man?” She was surprised. She expected more sympathy. “I want to talk with you,” she said. “But first I have to get the tea and coffee.” When she came back she came straight to the point. “What does a girl do,” she asked, “when she’s going to become a mother and she’s unmarried?” Mott was not shocked. “You tell me,” he said. “Well, I had an operation,” she said. “But now I feel like a murderer. I’ve even thought of killing myself.”

That left the businessman desperately groping around for the right thing to say, when suddenly the inspiration came. “Why, I have in my briefcase a copy of a prayer that a man prayed who was guilty of the same two sins that are haunting you. He had committed adultery, and he had committed murder. But as a result of this prayer, God forgave him. He cleaned him inside and out and made him as innocent as the day he was

born” “I sure would like to read that prayer,” the girl said. And Mott dived into the briefcase, came up with the Bible, and gave her the 51st Psalm.

Who is the evangelist, you ask? He is a deacon, a bishop, a social worker. He is an insurance company president, a Billy Graham, a housewife. He is a theologian, a doctor, a carpenter. Who is the evangelist? Don't ask the Bible that question unless you are ready for its answer. **You are!** You are the evangelist.

And if you say, “Not me, Lord. I'm not qualified!”, you are in good Biblical company. That is what Moses and Isaiah and Jonah said! By your excuses you are “kicking against the pricks” just like the Apostle Paul. And the Lord will say to you, as he had to say to Paul, “Get up, and go! You will be told what you have to do”. (Ac. 9:6, NEB).

And if you obey and get up and go, you will discover a great secret that the Bible reveals only to those who are willing to try: You are not really the evangelist after all. God is. The Great Evangelist is with you and in you and for you. This is the astounding Biblical paradox on evangelism: everyone is an evangelist; and no one is an evangelist. Only God! All you need to do is to hold open the door a little so men can go in and find Him.

That was how Sam Shoemaker saw it, as he is quoted in his wife's wonderful book about him, **I Stand By The Door**:

“I stand by the door,” he wrote.

“I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out.

The door is the most important door in the world—

It is the door through which men walk when they find God...

Men die outside that door, as starving beggars die

On cold nights, in cruel cities, in the dead of winter—

Nothing else matters compared to helping them find it,

And open it, and walk in, and find Him...

So I stand by the door..

You can go in too deeply and stay in too long,

And forget the people outside the door,

As for me, I shall take my old accustomed place,

Near enough to God to hear Him, and know He is there,

But not so far from men as not to hear them,

And remember they are there, too.

Where? Outside the door—

Thousands of them, millions of them.

But—more important for me—

One of them, two of them, ten of them,

Whose hands I am intended to put on the latch.

So I shall stand by the door and wait

For those who seek it.

‘I had rather be a door-keeper...’

So I stand by the door”.

You can't be an evangelist, you say? "All right," says God. "I'll settle for that. Just be a doorkeeper. I'll be the evangelist." Will you settle for that?

- (1). *Inst.* Bk. IV, iii. 4
- (2). McConnell, *John Wesley*, p. 90
- (3). quoted by Billy Graham, in L. Ford, *The Christian Persuader*
- (4). "On Prophecy and Technocracy", *Occasional Bulletin of the Missionary Research Library*, Oct. 1967, vol. xviii, no. 10
- (5). See J. Massie, in *Hastings Bible Dictionary*
- (6). F. Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, p. 40, and excursus
- (7). Karl Barth, "An Exegetical Study of Matt. 28:16-20," in G. Anderson, ed. *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, p. 67
- (8). Davies, *The Early Christian Church*, p. 87
- (9). See K. Strachan, "Call to Witness", in *Int. Rev. of Missions*, Apr. 1964, vol. LIII, no. 210, p. 194
- (10). D. Roberts, *Revolution in Evangelism*, p. 95; 100 f.

IV. How Urgent is the Task?

The chief task of the Christian church is to make Jesus Christ known, loved and obeyed in all the world. When it is put in that way Christians nod their heads in agreement. But that task begins with making Him known and loved, which is evangelism, and when we say, "What the church needs is more evangelism", people begin to back away.

They react in somewhat the same way as the Koreans did to my father in the early days of mission work in Korea. He was a pioneer in North Korea in the days when great sections of the country had never seen a white man before. He had also taken one of the first bicycles into that land, and, dressed in black with his white face, he was a strange sight indeed in a country of white clothes and darker faces. One day, out itinerating, he came to the top of a pass and began to coast down toward a little village that lay at the foot. Some Korean children were playing a game something like hopscotch at the edge of the village, but when they looked up to behold a strange creature in black clothes and white face, coat-tails flapping in the breeze, swooping silently down on them on an infernal machine at an incredible rate of speed, they scattered to the far corners of the village, shouting at the top of their voices, "Look out, look out! Here comes the devil riding on a pair of spectacles!"

There are American Christians who react in much the same way to the coming of the evangelist. Why?

Some are afraid of the evangelist because they say he is too emotional. They are still thinking of evangelism in terms of a Peter Cartwright camp meeting on the great American frontier. They remember the tales of the chroniclers, how the long-haired young dandies would come to the meetings to jeer and to scoff only to be seized by the power of Cartwright's preaching, until in an emotional spasm their back would bend almost to the breaking point, then, the tension suddenly released, they would snap

upright, their long hair cracking audibly like whips. The whole congregation would then be seized by the mass emotions of the revival, leaping, jumping, jerking. It all seems strange, and bizarre to us, and not a little frightening.

Others remember tales, which are always popular, of evangelists who turned out to be rascals and money-grabbers. Still others think of evangelism as a critical and divisive movement, mushrooming in a warm, dark, unhealthy growth outside the normal, clean atmosphere of the organized church, where preachers preach and laymen only listen. We have had a few evangelists in the Orient who held great meetings, and preached with effectiveness, but at the end of their crusades closed by warning their converts against any and all existing churches, and then departed never to return to those parts again. All they did was to leave behind leaderless little groups of suspicious converts, divorced from the strengthening fellowship that only the church can give, too easily drifting back into the darkness from which they came.

These are the major criticisms of evangelism. They are mixtures of truth and error. But the most alarming thing about this kind of reaction against evangelism is that it has virtually paralyzed great sections of the church of Jesus Christ in our time. The critics have made Christians afraid of evangelism.

But if the chief task of the church begins with making Jesus known so that he can be loved and obeyed—if it begins with evangelism—how dare Christians be afraid of it. It's like an army afraid to fight. If an army no longer believes in fighting it has no business being an army any more. If the church no longer believes in evangelism, it has no business being a church, for evangelism is the business of the church. "Evangelize," said the Lord, "and make disciples". Those were his marching orders.

As a matter of fact, if it is true that we no longer believe in evangelism, we may not have a church much longer. How long can United Presbyterians go on losing over 20,000 members a year?

Moreover, there is a new faith and a new religion on the horizon that does believe in evangelism—if you can call propaganda for a false faith evangelism. It not only believes in evangelism it practices it. This new faith is communism, and the communists are out-evangelizing us.

I am quite aware that the church faces other dangers and problems which are quite as urgent, and I do not believe that America's most pressing internal problem is communism; it is racial injustice. But in my part of the world the more pressing problem is communist totalitarianism, so let me speak of it, not in the spirit of an anti-communist crusade, but as a reminder that others are doing more than most Christians in evangelism.

I watched the Red tide sweep across China. We Protestants had been trying to win that country for Christ for one hundred and fifty years. The communists took it in thirty years. What makes them so successful? Their armies? That is no small part of the answer, of course. But as I lived behind the bamboo curtain and watched them for more than two years, I

became convinced that the real secret lies deeper. I am inclined to believe that the main reason the communists are so successful is simply this: that they believe in and practice evangelism with greater intensity for their false faith than most Christians do for the true faith.

We saw this when they first rolled over us. After the soldiers moved in, the communist evangelists came out of hiding, and put on the greatest evangelistic campaign that I have ever seen in my life, and I have heard Billy Graham! They staged meetings that lasted from early morning to after midnight, great mass meetings drenched with emotion. They put on plays and concerts and operas and movies, presented by the drama corps that is attached to every communist army division. It was an avalanche of evangelism that swept students and villagers off their feet. One of my own students, son of a Christian pastor, was soon coming to me to try to convert me to communism. "Dr. Moffett," he said, "you stay with us fifty years and you will see. We will have a paradise on earth right here in China."

Evangelism, you see, is more than mass meetings, and the communists know it. It is also personal witness. Six months after the communist wave washed over us, a little freshman at the Christian college near Peking where we were teaching came in great distress to one of her Christian advisers. Her father and mother were earnest Christians in South China, which had not yet been taken by the communists, and she was worried about them and about herself. "I wonder," she said, "if my family knows how hard it is for me to remain a Christian." She went on to say that her three roommates were all members of the communist youth corps which had taken as one of its objectives the conversion of every young Christian on that campus to communism. Twenty-four hours a day those roommates would work on her, ridiculing, arguing, frightening, pleading. When they were tired, others would step in to relieve them and keep up the terrifying pressure, urging her to throw away old superstitions and get into step with the New China. All the adviser could do was comfort her, counsel her and pray with her. From time to time afterwards she saw the girl, but the freshman didn't talk to her much any more. Then one day on the library wall which carried the slogans and announcements of the student-body, this notice appeared, signed by the little freshman: "I wish to announce to my fellow-students that I am no longer a Christian. I have discovered my mistake, and how I have been deceived..." Communist evangelism had gained another convert, and two grief-stricken parents in South China soon knew how really hard it was for their girl to keep the Christian faith.

This is the kind of evangelism that has made communism the greatest evangelistic movement since the rise of Islam. It is a steady, relentless propagation of the faith. I have seen the communist armies at work and also the communist evangelists. And I am more afraid of the evangelists. I have seen their zeal—a zeal most Christians have abandoned to fringe groups, such as "holy rollers"—and to communists.

A woman in Bogota, Colombia, once told a missionary there that she

had won nearly two hundred and fifty of her fellow students to Karl Marx in one year after her conversion to communism. Make no mistake. Communism is an evangelistic faith. It keeps its cutting edge sharp and hard, and every communist is an evangelist.

And what about Christians? How do you and I compare, for example, with that young communist in Colombia? How many people did you ever win to Jesus Christ in one year? The answer to the future of the world in our generation may well lie in that bitter comparison, for it is the evangelist, and not the soldier, who will ultimately win the world.

But if as Christians we look tired, discouraged, and ready to give up on a world we are losing to others, then we are no longer worthy to bear the name Christian. Remember the words of the Lord to his disciples, who were also at times too easily discouraged. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (Jn. 17:33). And remember again how he said, "Ye shall receive power...and ye shall be my witnesses...unto the uttermost part of the earth". (Acts 1:8).

Perhaps I have spent too much time speaking of the communists and their evangelistic zeal. We must be aware of that, but our example is not the communist, but the Christ! So, while we must be aware of the power of communist propaganda, we must remember that our power is not in propaganda. It is in Christ. We must be aware of the communist menace to the freedoms of the world, but that is not the only menace, and I am not calling you to evangelism as to a holy war against the communists. The Christian's call to evangelism is a higher and a holier call than that. It comes from Jesus Christ who looks out on fields white unto the harvest and asks us to be his evangelists. The need is great, and the laborers are few, and the enemy waxes bold, but how can the Christian be discouraged when God himself says that power is available, and the victory shall surely be to Jesus Christ?

Stop looking at the enemy for a moment, and look at Him, and look at the need all about you. Some people say that this is a Christian country. We put "In God We Trust" on our dimes. And we open the Senate with prayer. And we don't let people swear on the radio and T.V.—at least we try to keep them from it. Our President is a Christian, and our Secretary of State is a Presbyterian, and our politicians always speak well of the Bible. Doesn't that make us a Christian country?

Listen. There are people in our mountains who have never heard of Jesus Christ, and people in our churches who act as if they had never heard of Him. Many American cities are more pagan than the one in which I live in Korea. In the U.S.A. we say all men are brothers, but we don't practice it. There are seventeen million young people, we are told, in this country who have never once darkened the door of a church. And if all this is true, then right here in America, the chief task of the church, as everywhere else, is still evangelism!

Sometimes it may be by great mass meetings. There are so many millions to be reached. It would encourage me to see in America a revival

of mass evangelism. I would not be frightened by it. Too emotional? A religion which doesn't reach the emotions never really becomes vital at all.

But again, let me remind you that evangelism is more than mass meetings. The hardest and most important evangelism of all is not that which you let others, specially gifted of the Holy Spirit, do for you, but that which you, by the same grace of God, do yourself.

I had lunch with a Jew one day. I was in New York, and the restaurant was crowded and he came up and asked if he could share the table with me, which I was glad to let him do. He was a friendly and curious soul and began to ask me questions. His name was Sam Birnbaum. He was in the metal equipment business. "What line are you in?" he asked. "I'm a Presbyterian minister," I said, and he thought that over for a while.

Then he said, "I don't usually talk about this, but seeing as you are in the religious line, why do Christians hate the Jews?" And that kept me silent for a moment. How relentlessly our failures in race come back home to roost. But then I said, "They don't. Real Christians do not hate the Jews. Jews are really nearer to Christians in faith than anyone else." And that started us off on the Jewish problem. He told me all about his synagogue, his rabbi. We got quite friendly. Then he asked me some more about my work, and I said I was going to be a missionary.

"You mean," he said, "that you are going to go out and try to convert people?" I nodded, and he looked at me unbelievably. "Why?" he said. "You wouldn't want to convert me, would you?"

What should I have said? He was a fine fellow. We were getting along famously. I had taken a good stop forward in bringing the Jew and the Christian closer together as they should be. Shouldn't I have continued along the same line and answered, "No, of course I wouldn't want to convert you. You are a fine fellow as you are." That was what he expected me to say. But I didn't. I said, "Yes. I'd like to convert you". And he was as surprised a man as I have seen in some time.

But in a case like that doesn't the Christian have to say "Yes." Our Christian conviction is that men are not all right as they are. They need Christ, and without Christ no matter how nice or how good or how wise they are they are not all right. Only because Christians have believed that strongly enough to do something about it—only because faith led to evangelism—only because the first Christians were evangelists, are we today Christians. The Greeks were wise, but Paul knew that they needed evangelizing. The barbarians were fine, spirited civilians, but Boniface and Gregory and Augustine knew they needed Christ. So does Sam Birnbaum. So does every man who has not opened his heart to the Lord Christ.

Sam knew all about Jesus. He told me himself what a fine man Jesus was—a Jew, too. He also liked Cardinal Spellman. But if that is all there is to it, if Jesus is just another fine man for fine people like Sam Birnbaum to approve of, then we can all go home and forget it. But if Jesus Christ is our risen Lord and Saviour, the Master and Captain of our souls, the Son of God; and if God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son

that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life—if Jesus is Lord, and if men are lost, and our faith is true; then Christians have a job to do. And sometimes that job is right in our own home town, at a restaurant table. It can be harder right there than in Tibet.

If you think you can't do it, if you say you are not ready, if you answer only with an excuse—then don't sit there and complain while the communists take the world away from you!

Samuel Hugh Moffett

